

(d) In order to fulfil the national endeavour of adequate and timely supply of quality seeds at reasonable prices to the farmers, the National Seeds Corporation will be restructured for efficient utilization of investment and manpower. The restructuring would be in terms of augmenting the infrastructure of production and distribution of improved varieties of quality seeds and planting material.

(e) The present role of the Corporation is:

- * To produce and distribute seeds of high quality to the farmers.
- * To bring about awareness among the farming community towards utilization of high quality seeds.
- * Fulfilling a social obligation of producing and distributing seed of such crops which are not commercially profitable.

In future, the Corporation will aspire:—

- * To be a leader in the field of production, multiplication, distribution and related activities in the area of quality seeds through efficient and optimum use of resources.
- * To diversify the product mix in favour of high value-low volume seeds to further improve the profitability of the Corporation.
- * To enter technology partnerships with internal and external organizations to promote high quality genetic material in seed production.
- * To explore diversification to tissue culture, bio-technology etc.

Fertility of Agricultural Land

† 3257. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the fertility of agricultural land is decreasing continuously;

(b) if so, whether Government are contemplating to take measures for increasing the fertility of agricultural land in various parts of the country; and

(c) if so, the outline thereof and if not, in which manner Government intend to solve this problem?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

[25 August, 2000]

RAJYA SABHA

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.RB.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) Yes, Sir. Intensive cropping with high inputs and high yielding varieties have resulted in decline in soil fertility, particularly in respect of micro and secondary nutrients elements due to their removal at a rate more than their replenishment.

(b) and (c) Generally, the fertility of soils improves with improvement in moisture availability in the soil. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation is advocating soil and water conservation and soil test based balanced and integrated nutrient management through conjunctive use of both inorganic and organic sources of plant nutrients to restore soil fertility.

The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation is implementing various land based programmes, namely (i) Soil Conservation in the catchments of River Valley Projects (RVP) and Flood Prone Rivers (FPR), (ii) Watershed Development Project in Shifting Cultivation Areas, (iii) National Watershed Development Project in Rainfed Areas and (iv) Reclamation of Alkali Soils, to minimise land degradation which ultimately results in enhanced fertility in the agricultural land of the country. In addition to the above, the State Governments implement their own Plan Schemes for improving fertility of such areas in their States.

Losses due to flood in Gujarat

3258. SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there was flood in Gujarat during this monsoon particularly during 10th to 15th July, 2000;

(b) if so, the loss of crops, properties, animals and human beings; and

(c) the assistance being provided by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. As reported by the Government of Gujarat, the heavy rains and floods in the State during the current monsoon period has affected a population of 4.08 lakhs in 10 districts and caused damage to about 24,000 houses besides loss of 106 human lives and 405 cattle. Central share of Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) for 2000-01 amounting to Rs. 131.14 crore has already been released to the State for undertaking necessary relief measures in the wake of natural calamities including heavy rains and floods.